

22 December 2021

Committee Secretariat
Social Services and Community Committee
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Cc: Angie.Warren-Clark@parliament.govt.nz
(Chairperson, Social Services and Community Committee)

Tēnā koe,

I welcome public submissions currently being called for the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System and Children and Young People's Commission Bill.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission has a strong interest in the Bill, as it directly impacts priority population groups the Commission has a responsibility to monitor and report on, in particular young people, children in state care and children experiencing adverse childhood events. The Bill also provides a critical opportunity for the Government to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in the sharing of power and decision making with Māori, who are proportionally over-represented in Oranga Tamariki care.

I am concerned, however, that the timeframe for public submissions falls across the summer school holidays, which will effectively limit the ability of children, young people and whānau to submit on the Bill. Agencies with a responsibility or interest in children and young people's wellbeing need time to engage directly with the communities they serve, and the submission timeframe over a holiday period does not support this good practice.

It is critical that children and young people have a say on this Bill. The current Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State Care demonstrates the importance of involving whānau and children in the oversight and monitoring of the care and protection system.

As the proposed Children and Young People's Commission will represent all children and young people in Aotearoa, they are entitled to meaningful opportunities to understand what is being proposed and be involved in the process. This right is enshrined in Article 12 of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child and is a core outcome of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

We request that the deadline for submissions be extended to the end of February 2022 to allow for this engagement. Thank you for your consideration, and for your role in supporting communities to have a say on this important legislation

Ngā mihi,



Karen Orsborn
Chief Executive
Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission